

Date: January 9, 2001

Dear FCC et al:

Please accept my one day late submission of reply comments regarding RM-8658.

I am a 75 year old hard of hearing consumer who has children and grandchildren who have a lesser degree of hearing loss. I would really like to see substantial improvements in phone communications for all of us. I have also been trying to convince your agency to issue a public notice to the general public aimed mostly at the end users of voice menus/voicemail systems to encourage them to make the systems more user friendly. The preceding sentence is submitted for information only and should not be considered relevant to the cell phone problems.

Because it will likely not be long before cell phones replace in large measure the land wired phones in use in our country, I believe all possible must be done to expedite the development of technology of cell phones that will make them truly useable by the hard of hearing. If the exemption from the HAC Act of 1988 being revoked is helpful in hastening the day when cell phones are indeed accessible, and I believe it will be, then the exemption should no longer be allowed.

I support the comments made by other disabled and especially the large organizations who represent us such as SHHH and Alexander Graham Bell.

It is my observation that the matter of compatibility of hearing aids with cell phones (and also the whole area of even a normal hearer) in trying to decide what phones and services are best for s/he is quite complex. The methods in marketing are especially difficult because it seems that most of them only allow a 3 day trial period (some as little as 24 hours). I am aware that one of them, AT&T (and I commend them for this), allows a 30 day period; and, if they can do this why cannot all of them?

I recently tried to use a Nokia Model 5165 and a 8260 along with their neckloops (cost \$ 99.) and while the 8260 was not at all satisfactory, the 5165 while much better, was considered risky for me to use because of my being implanted with a heart defibrillator.

Another observation is that part of our problem is we are dependent on hearing aids and so it seems the cell phone industry has the tack that perhaps the hearing aids can be modified to permit the cell phones to work better (and that industry should be expected to make a strong effort as well).

I also learned that the Hatis (re Hearing Aid Telephone Interconnect System) accessory, that Verizon mentions as a potential solution, costs \$ 199 - \$ 299. I think this is quite an expensive accessory for most hard of hearing. These accessories are being made necessary because of the technology that for the average person is a very nice thing to have available, but in our case runs up our costs of living and employment. Seems to me that we need a break. Just as the technology of voice menu/voicemail has thrown us behind, so has the fact we have (and will have) even less accessibility as time passes as regards cell phones.

I also learned from one of Columbus Ohio's prominent speech and hearing centers that it does not intend, for the near future anyway, to have a trial version of the Hatis accessory to assist a prospective purchaser in making a decision whether to buy one.

The Hatis company recommended to me that this would be a good approach for me to help decide (re to have the help of an audiologist). So this further complicates things because we are being asked so to speak to “buy a pig in a poke”.

I would again like to suggest that some manufacturer(s) consider making an accessory that would be similar to the \$ 24.99 device that Radio Shack (catalog # 43-148) sells for land-wired phones that is so designed it could connect to a cell phone jack on one end and with its own external jack connect to a standard headset. To accommodate such a device would necessitate that cell phones be manufactured in a manner to allow the accessory to connect therewith with an external audio only jack built in.

The device I have in mind would be useable by the 50% or so of hard of hearing persons wearing hearing aids that do not have T-coils built in. It is also possible that many of the hearing aid users with T-coils that can simply place the headsets (preferably binaural) next to the hearing aid mikes. Finally it is possible the external jacks on the cell phones could be connected to headsets for normal hearing persons.

For those cell phones that have one external jack for combination mike and audio headset, these could be replaced over time by ones having a separate jack for mikes and for audio. This could serve both the normal hearing and the hard of hearing who could use the accessory device I am suggesting. For the normal hearing the headset could be an accessory that allows hands free usage for the use of the cell phone as opposed to at ear level, for health reasons, and safety reasons while driving vehicles. In fact a requirement for both type of jacks to be incorporated in all future cell phones makes a good deal of sense.

I would also suggest that smaller is not necessarily better as illustrated by the difference between the two Nokia models mentioned above. Thus the mini-jacks that are presently used for the combination headsets ought to be considered for obsolescence if the larger standard jacks that over all may be more utilitarian.

Please consider my comments in your deliberations.

Sincerely yours,

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